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REV. JOHN BOWER,

FIRST MINISTER

AT

DERBY, CONN.

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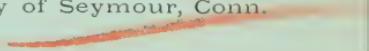
AND HIS DESCENDANTS,

BY

*C. C. Baldwin, Secretary of the Historical Society at Cleveland, Ohio,  
and Corresponding Member of the New England Historic  
Genealogical Society of Boston.*

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Reprinted from W. C. Sharpe's History of Seymour, Conn.



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*Seymour, Conn.*  
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REV. JOHN BOWER,

FIRST MINISTER AT DERBY.

The first clergyman of Derby was Rev. John Bower, who was settled there in 1672 and died in 1688. He was a graduate of Harvard College, class of 1649. He was a son of George Bower, or Bowers, found in Scituate, Mass. in 1637, in Plymouth in 1639, and who removed to Cambridge. George lived in Cambridge on the east side of North Avenue, not far from the railroad bridge. There his wife Barbara died, 25th March, 1644. He m. 2<sup>nd</sup> Elizabeth Worthington, and had Jerathmeel, b. 1650. George Bowers had some trouble with his son Benamuel, for in May, 1652, he was complained of for rending a deed with several articles between them. Yet in 1656 he conveyed twenty acres in Charleston next Cambridge line to Benamuel. He voted several years but at the same court in 1652 was fined for it, not being a sworn freeman. Both offences were complained of by Thomas Danforth, who apparently made it waru for him. He died late in 1656, his will of 8th Nov. being proved 30th Dec. of that year, and his widow married 25th June, 1657, Henry Boutell or Boutwell. He had two daughters—Patience, m. Humphrey Bradstreet, and Silence; and by his first wife two sons, undoubtedly born in England. Benamuel of Cambridge, who suffered imprisonment, whipping and fines as a quaker, and Rev. John, graduated at Harvard College in 1649. John was a school master in Plymouth, perhaps (says Savage) the earliest in the business.

New Haven was early ambitious to have a classical school, which however was maintained with difficulty, so few wished to study "Latten."

"8th Nov., 1652, the Governor informed the Court that the cause of calling this meeting was about a school master to let them know what he hath done in it; he hath written a letter to one Mr. Bower, who is school master at Plymouth and desireth to come into these parts to live."

Dec. 20th, 1652, the Governor had received a letter from Mr. Bower, who was willing to come but could not until spring because he was engaged in Plymouth until April and he wished to know what the town expected. The town declared he might "for the worke and the paye" have the terms Mr. Hanford had. The terms with Hanford in 1651 were, he was "to have £29 a yeare and the towne to pay for his chamber and dyet, (which they have agreed with Mr. Atwater for, for 5s per week.) That his paye bee goods and some of it such as wherewith he may buy bookes and defraye charges in his travel. That he have libertie once a yeare to goe see his friends which was propounded to be in harvest time. That if he be called away (not to the same worke) but some other employment which may be

“for the honor of Christ he may have libertie, and for this he will teach the  
“children of this towne, (having the benefit of strangers to himself) after  
“they are entered and can reade in ye Testament to perfect them in English  
“and teache them their latir tengite as they are capable and to wright.”

The arrival of Mr. Bower is noticed 21st June, 1653, and he boarded with Thomas Kimberly. His predecessor had trouble with scholars not far enough advanced for his school, and May 1st, 1654, a complaint was made that Mr. Bower was so employed in teaching children their letters that the “Lattin” suffered, so two towusmen were deputed to send such children home. 3rd April, 1660, Mr. Bower informed the town that there were in this high school, only eighteen scholars, and sometimes but six or eight present, and he wanted to know “whether they would have a schoole or no schoole.” This year closed his seven years service. We hear of him next in Guilford, where in 1660, says Smith, he purchased an estate and supplied the pulpit for three or four years until Mr. Joseph Elliot was settled, which was in 1664. In another place Mr. Smith says John Cotton and Mr. Bower jointly supplied the pulpit. He was not as popular as Mr. Elliot after him.

In 1666 on the removal of a part of the planters of Branford to New Jersey, with their pastor, Mr. Pierson, he engaged Mr. Bower to preach in his place, and himself paid him to the end of that year. The people gave a formal call to him Jan. 6th, 1667, to become their pastor, voting to allow him for the next year forty pounds and a days work from every planter. They renewed it year by year adding to the salary.

In May, 1671, he was invited to settle there and accepted. 3rd of that year but left in 1672. He had previously meditated removing to Derby, as 18th April, 1671, Derby granted him twelve acres for a home. 18th Nov., 1673, the planters there voted to build him a house, and it is recorded next that the first year Mr. Bower is willing to take what the inhabitants would voluntarily give, as they are at great expense in building.

In 1681 and again in 1682 they voted him fifty pounds for a years salary. Mr. Bower's will is recorded in Derby records as well as at New Haven. It is dated Jan. 8th, 1684, (1685).\* It is very short, speaking of him as being

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\*A copy of Mr. Bower's will—from the Town Records of Derby—no date to the record.

*The last will and testament of Mr. John Bower of Derby, being very weak of body but of perfect understanding and memory, do leave these lines as my last will and testament.*

*Impri. My will is yt after my decease, my dearly beloved wife, Bridget Bower, shall have ye disposal of my whole estate, to dispose of it amongst our children, as she shall see cause, he desirring yt ye birthright may be remembered if he eary it well to his honored mother, as witness my hand, this eight day of jenuary, one thousand, six hundred eighty four,*

*ABELL GUN.*

*JOB FRISBIE.*

*John Bower.*

The will no doubt was written by another, while Mr. Bower was sick, and signed by him, and the bad spelling may be due to the scribe or recorder.

very weak in body and giving his wife Bridget the full disposal of his estate, care of the children, &c., desiring y<sup>t</sup> ye birthright, (*ie.* double portion) may be remembered if he carry it well to his honored mother." He died 14th June, 1687. His widow continued to reside in Derby, where she died 19th May, 1720. Her house is mentioned in 1701, the pound being "as you go to Mrs. Bower's, her house."

In 1676 he joined with the Rev. Zachariah Walker of Woodbury in a letter urging defence of Woodbury and Derby "as would be the first attacked."

He married at New Haven, Bridget Thompson, daughter of Anthony Thompson of New Haven. Mr. and Mrs. Bower's had at least the following children, perhaps more.

Ruth, bapt. 20th Dec., 1657, m. 2nd Dec., 1674, John Frisbie of Branford, and had children—John, 23rd May, 1676; Edward, 24th Jan., 1678; Rebecca, 14th Nov., 1679; Hannah, 18th Jan., 1681; Samuel, 10th Feb., 1683; Ruth, 6th Dec., 1685, d. 26th May, 1688; Joseph, 15th Aug., 1688. As widow and administratrix of her husband, she deeds 20th Jan., 1700, to her son Samuel, with assent of her son John. Mr. Savage says she m. 2nd, William Hoadly.

Mary, m. 1682, Samuel Nichols.

Samuel, 5th Nov., 1665.

John, born at Guilford, 3rd Dec., 1667.

Ann, m. 2nd Sept., 1703, Francis French of Derby.

Nathaniel. The latter does not appear in Savage's Dictionary, but 29th Dec., 1707, Mrs. Bridget Bower deeds to "my beloved son Nathaniel Bower of Greenwitch, in the county of Fairfield." He removed to East New Jersey and in the grant for Derby appear the minor heirs of Nathaniel Bower in East New Jersey, deceased. He was Rev. Nathaniel, minister of the first church in Greenwich in 1700. He succeeded Mr. Wakeman at Newark, New Jersey, and was succeeded shortly after Aug., 1716, by Mr. Whittlesey in Newark. He is beyond all question the Rev. Mr. Bower of Rye—in 1696, and remaining there until 1700, when he was "settled" at Greenwich. The period of his stay at Rye was while the people of Rye "revolted" from New York to Connecticut, which revolt apparently arose in considerable degree at least, from religious feeling. In 1700 the town ordered his salary to be paid "in specie as followeth, wheat at five shillings per bushel, and all other provisions pay equivalent." His salary was fifty pounds.

SAMUEL, born in 1665, m. 1st, in 1687, Ruth Wooster of Derby, daughter of Edward Wooster from Milford. He m. 2nd, 4th Nov., 1691, Lydia French, daughter of Francis and sister of the husband of Ann Bower. She was born 28th Sept., 1670. He was several times constable, (then an office of high honor), and was alive as late as 1708. He had children at least

Lydia, born Aug. 2nd, 1692.

Rebeckah, born March 9th, 1694, died Dec. 7th, 1712.

Kezziah, born March 2nd, 169<sup>8</sup>.

Miriam, born April 5th, 1703, m. Oct. 7th, 1724, Ephraim Washbon.

Samuel, born Dec. 2nd, 17—(torn off) who m. a wife Sarah, and had a daughter born in Derby, Jan. 8th, 1729.

JOHN, born in 1667, appears in Derby in 1693, and continued there, holding various places of trust. He was surveyor in 1705, collector in 1706, deputy to the legislature in May, 1708, dying in September of the same year and styled Mr. He is identified beyond question by a deed from his mother in 1707. It is generally said that he was minister for a while in Rye. This is a mistake, originating with Mather in his *Magnalia*, who put at Rye in 1696, Mr. Bower, H. C. (Harvard College). This was John the first, but out of date. Trumbull in his history of Conn. says *John* Bower removed from Derby and settled at Rye about 1688. Mr. Savage makes it the Sen. John—but it appears plainly in Mr. Baird's History of Rye, p. 281, that the only Bower of Rye was Nathaniel. Mr. Baird adds he knows nothing of Nathaniel's antecedents which we here set forth.

To help the confusion that has existed as to the Johns—here was in Greenwich a John Bower, neither of these as in Vol. IV of Fairfield Probate Records is his will 1693, who gives to his daughter-in-law Judah Reynolds and sister Hester Buckley? John of Greenwich was 43 years old in 1681. There was also in 1672 a Mr. John of Oxford, Mass., who had a son in South Middletown, Conn. I do not know what children this second John of Derby had, but a third Mr. John m. Nov. 22nd, 1732, Sarah Riggs, died 26th Jan., 173<sup>7</sup><sub>8</sub>, and April 18th, 1739 his widow married Rev. Mr. Daniel Humphreys. They had at least a daughter, Sarah, born Aug. 18th, 1736.

Rev. Daniel Humphreys and his wife Sarah above named were parents of General David Humphreys, born 1752 or 1753—from whom Seymour was first named Humphreysville.

Anthony Thompson of New Haven, (the father of Bridget, wife of John Bower), with his wife, two children and brothers John and William embarked at London in 1637, on board the *Hector* with Gov. Eaton, Rev. Mr. Davenport and others of the New Haven colony, arriving at Boston June 26th, 1637. They were among the first settlers at New Haven, where he signed the compact, June 4th, 1639.

Anthony died March 23rd, 1647, making a nuncupative will in the presence of Rev. Davenport and Robert Newman, which was proved May 27th, 1650. He left fifteen pounds to Bridget, (daughter of his first wife), to be paid her at the age of eighteen years, provided she disposed of herself in marriage with the consent and approbation of her mother and the elders of the church then being. As she married a clergyman and the classical school teacher of New Haven, it is to be hoped the widow and elders were not averse to the match.

Anthony had children, John and Anthony, when he came. Bridget was born here. He married 2nd, Catherine, and had two daughters by her;

Hannah, who married a Staunton; and Lydia, who married Isaac Crittenden; and one son, Ebenezer, 15th Oct., 1648, who was born some months after the will and probably posthumous.

He remembered the daughters and the widow while she was his widow. She forfeited her share by marrying Nicholas Camp in 1652, but she was still loved by her step children, for Anthony gave his property to his brother John, sister Bridget, his three half sisters, children of "Goodwife Camp," and his "mother-in-law," *ie.* step-mother.

William, the brother of the first Anthony, died 24th April, 1683, leaving neither wife or children. He gave property to his nephews and nieces, calling them cousins, and among them his "beloved cousin Bridget Bower."

The Thompsons might be presumptively from the neighborhood of many of the New Haven emigrants, to-wit: Kent, London and Hertfordshire, but Bridget's brother Ebenezer died in Guilford in 1676 and is called a Scotchman. Possibly the Thompsons had moved from Scotland to London. Anthony evidently was respected in New Haven, for it appears by the Colonial Records that he was very often chosen by the court as a committee man or an arbitrator in case of doubt or trouble.

In March, 1643, he was with several others at training fined "6d for foole (foul) guns." There were fined in all, thirty-eight men, so we judge the service was not much better than Falstaff's motley company. In 1647 it was charged that "the last night he watched he fell asleep." The only effect seems to have been that Richard Osborne who made the charge, was made to "pay 40s. fine to the town for his slanderous reproach layed on the watch-masters, which he was not able to make out or prove." Osborne had also to acknowledge his "sinne" in general court. In 1648, Anthony Thompson having deceased, another was chosen in his place as "collector for the colledge corne."

His nuncupative will, made May 27, 1650, was not allowed as a legal will, but it was ordered that the wife should administer upon the estate "according to the particulars in this writing contained," which would seem about as well as if it was a legal will. This left out poor Ebenezer as though he had no business to be born after his father died. Barnabas Baldwin, b. September, 1665, son of Richard, the "moderator," of Derby, who died intestate in July of the same year, was similarly punished.

#### PETITION FOR A CHURCH AT DERBY.

For the following petition to the general court at Hartford we are indebted to Hon. Charles J. Hoadley of Hartford. It is written and signed by Mr. Bower.

To the Hon<sup>r</sup>ble Gen<sup>ll</sup> Court at Hartford we humbly crave leave to pr sent as followeth :

We may truly say as sometimes said good Nehemiah in somew<sup>t</sup> a like case, that G<sup>d</sup> hath put into or<sup>r</sup> hearts & y<sup>t</sup> for some space of time and desirous

we are all now & y<sup>t</sup> as one man to build the L<sup>d</sup> or G<sup>d</sup> an house & to endor the enjoy<sup>mt</sup> of a eeh state according to ye order of the Gospell amongst orselves in this place where divine providence hath cast us, wch if the L<sup>d</sup> shall grant unto us, we shall say w<sup>th</sup> the psalmist y<sup>t</sup> our lives are fallen in pleasant places & y<sup>t</sup> we have a goodly heritage, especially if y<sup>t</sup> ye name of or little citty, (if it shall co'e to y<sup>t</sup>) may be Jehovah Sham'ah the L<sup>d</sup> is there.

The causes moving hereunto are

- 1 Gods com'and 1. Hagg 8. Go build the house wch relates to Christ's visible eeh so termed: 1 Tim: 3, 15: The house of G<sup>d</sup> wch is ye eeh of ye living God.
- 2 Christ's com'and: 6 Math: 33: first seek the kingdo'e of G<sup>d</sup> wch relates to a church State: the vissible eeh of Christ on earth being ye kingdo'e of he a' or of G<sup>d</sup> on earth 25 Math: 1.
- 3 The great cont<sup>mt</sup> G<sup>d</sup> takes to breathe in ye counsi' of saints in a ch state & y<sup>t</sup> above all other societies 87 ps 2: 132 ps 13 so on: That is my rest etc.
- 4 The promise of G<sup>ds</sup> presence wch & blessing upo' his eeh: 20 Exod 24: 87 ps 5. 6.
- 5 The practise of true beleiving ones in primitive times to embody yms in a eeh state though but few: of wch ye N. T. gives abundant proof
- 6 We desire to be under a eeh watch, wch of all watches is the most striet 12 Heb 15. Looking diligently.

These & such like consideratio's have put us upo' our forementioned desires & in order to the further prosecution of ye same, we did in the 1<sup>st</sup> place make our addresses unto the throne of grace for guidance & to seek of G<sup>d</sup> a right way for us and our little ones After this we sent unto the churches of Christ next adjacent & we have (as will appear by yr letters) their consent and advice to up and bee doing in wch respect we may set up or Ebenezer & say hitherto ye L<sup>d</sup> hath helped & set before us an open door And hereby we are the more embolned according to or boundin duty humbly to entreat (Hon<sup>rs</sup> fathers of the Com'onwealth & nourishers of Gods Israel) that you wil please to cast a favorable aspect upo' these or desires & y<sup>t</sup> or looking w<sup>t</sup>ever of obliquity or human frailty yr honors may have espied or may now in these, wch might justly impedim<sup>t</sup>, and give us leave to build an house for or God and with yr leave under God by his assistance we will say: as 15 Exod 2 he is or God and we will prepare hi' an habitatio' our fathers God & we will exalt hi'.

Hon<sup>ro</sup> fathers, if G<sup>d</sup> shall so dispose of yr hearts as to abbet, encourage, assist, protect us in this matt<sup>r</sup> we wil yet againe set up or Ebenezer & say behold he hath set before us an open door & no man can shutt it. If it shall be object<sup>d</sup>, we are poor: A. G<sup>ds</sup> ordinances will enrich us, 6 Math: 33: 3. Pro. 9, 10 but if you are few & small: we would answer in the Lords own words 4 Zach: 10, who hath despised the day of small things. We read y<sup>t</sup> instru-

ments have been too maney, never too few for G<sup>d</sup> to work by: & therefore through G<sup>d</sup> we shall do valliantly.

Y<sup>r</sup> hon<sup>rs</sup> humble supplicants & faithful servants in the name of the rest of or<sup>r</sup> brethe<sup>r</sup> & neighbo<sup>r</sup>s

Derby: the 6th of May, 1678.

*John Bower.*

JOHN HULLS,  
JOSEPH HAWKINS.

NOTE.—In the original m and other letters are frequently omitted and the omission is indicated by a wave line over the preceding letter. No such type being available, the omissions have here been indicated by apostrophes.

#### TROUBLE WITH INDIANS.

In the first volume of Cothren's History of Woodbury is an interesting letter from Rev. Mr. Walker of Woodbury, and Rev. Mr. Bower of Derby, relating to the removal of inhabitants from their places on account of the Indians and securing of these two plantations. The original is on file in Hartford in the handwriting of Mr. Walker and signed by both:

“To ye Honour'd Gen<sup>r</sup> Court convened at Hartford Octob<sup>r</sup> 12th 1676 we whose names are hereunto subscribed do humbly propose as followeth:

That whereas ye providence of God hath so ordered that by means of late troubles brought upon ye country we the inhabitants of Woodbury and Derby have been necessitated to remove from or<sup>r</sup> dwellings And a more favorable aspect of Providence at ye present inviting us to a return & ye necessity of many of or<sup>r</sup> families in part inforcing it yet forasmuch as we cannot be assured but ye like danger may again arise we make bold before such or<sup>r</sup> return to request this honour'd Court to resolve us in one important inquiry viz in case the war w<sup>th</sup> ye indians should be again renewed what we may expect & trust to from ye authority of this Colony in order to or<sup>r</sup> protection & safety? We humbly request that or<sup>r</sup> inquiry may neither be judged offensive nor concluded irrational till ye following grounds of it be considered:

1 First we cannot be insensible of or<sup>r</sup> former experience viz: that in a time when danger threatened ye loudest & or<sup>r</sup> two plantations afores<sup>d</sup> were probably in greatest hazzard we were not only without any other help but or<sup>r</sup> own for ye guarding of or<sup>r</sup> ould place but or<sup>r</sup> own also w<sup>ch</sup> were indeed too few were taken from us time after time being pressed from ye sea-side towns when occasionally they came thither about necessary business whereby we had more proportionally to or<sup>r</sup> members from or<sup>r</sup> two plantations employed in ye publick service then (we suppose) any other town of ye Colony; And as by ye means we were forced to a removall so yr in we had not the least benefit of any guard for ye safety of or<sup>r</sup> persons or goods.

2 Neither can we be insensible how unable many persons will bee after a second remove to those plantations without ruine to ye families to return again to these older plantations; partly by means of ye chargeableness of such removes & partly by means of what disappointments we have already met with.

3 Thirdly we desire ye mutuall obligation betwixt rulers & subjects may be considered viz: yt as ye latter owe subjection respecting both ye persons & estates; so ye former are obliged to protect both according to ye best ability providing that they may lead a quiet & peceable life.

4 Let it be considered; that though formerly the country had cause enough because sin enough to beget an expectation of affliction yet yr was little or no expectation yt it should arise from such means before it did begin; the experience yr fore of so unexpected an affliction affords (notwithstanding a present seeming cessation) ye more cause to expect ye like again sooner or ater especially so little of reformation any where appearing: If therefore new-begun & remote plantations may not in such hazzards have any promise of just protection ye non-encouragint of such (as will endanger their desertion) so it will discourage any other persons from erecting any other for ye enlargement of ye Colony & whether yt will not be much to ye disadvantage of ye Colony we leave upon inquiry.

5 The secureing of those two plantations of Woodberry & Darby will according to second causes be one of ye most considerable securities in a time of such dangers unto ye two western counties viz, of New Haven & Fairfield for it can hardly be expected yt any strength of indians will adventure to set upon any lower plantation till they have attempted ours above & if they fail they will be ye more shy of pounding themselves by coming lower.

6 Though we cannot affirm yet we are not without some reason to suspect (& yt fore only propound it as a conditionall argument) that ye charges expended in other colonies for garrisoning some of their out towns & fetching offe ye persons & goods of some others will come upon account in ye publick charges of ye war to be proportionably borne by ye three Colonies which if it be this Colony will not be so much ye shorter in ye bill of expenses because they have not done ye like & virtually fined to ye other Colonies because they had not as extensive & generall a care of yr out plantations yt were most exposed to danger as other Colonies had of theirs.

We humbly request yo<sup>r</sup> consideration of ye premises & yt yo<sup>r</sup> worships will so far regard or infant plantations as to afford us some intimation of yo<sup>r</sup> pleasure concerning this or inquiry.

Yours in all due observance

*John Bower.* in ye behalfe of Derby.

ZECHARIAH WALKER in ye behalfe of Woodberry.











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